

Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Thursday, December 12, 2002
Department of Workforce Development
Madison, Wisconsin

MINUTES

Electronically approved by members 2-4-03

Council Members:	Sarah Benton, Chair; Jason Altmann; Linda Jennison; and Helen Rizzi
Council Members In Absentia:	Twyla Niedfeldt, Vice-Chair; John Boyer; and Alex Slappey
BDHH Staff:	Linda Huffer (BDHH Interim Director); Alice Sykora (BDHH Central Office and Council Liaison); Karen Dishno (BDHH Central Office); and Ron Sanders (Regional Coordinator, Southeastern Region I)
Visitors:	Todd Behana (Wisconsin Relay Service); Patti Bannier (Wisconsin Relay Service); Billy Mauldin (Wisconsin Relay Service); and Julie Springer (WI-SHHH, Eau Claire)
Interpreters:	Mary Lynn Rose; Sandi Peplinski; and Laurie Sanheim
Real-Time Captioner:	Rosie Coulthart

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Welcome/Approval of Minutes/Housekeeping:

Members approved through electronic votes the September 12, 2002, minutes.

Council Reports:

Chair's Report (Sarah Benton):

- The Council had an email discussion on ad hoc membership and decided that people interested in serving the Council in a non-member capacity would be involved in subcommittees, such as Mental Health, Legislative Initiatives, and the like.
- In order to better understand issues in regions and get a better understanding of what BDHH does, individual members will continue to hold pre-Council meetings with Regional Coordinators. RCs will initiate contact and set up the meetings. If there are no council members in a region, the RC can join the pre-council meeting in a neighboring region. With a better understanding, the Council could better advocate for or help to improve BDHH services.
- Jason Altmann will resign as a Council member as of January 6, 2003 to begin his job as Regional Coordinator for BDHH's Northern Region. The Council wishes him well.

Nominations Committee (Linda Jennison):

- The nominations of Kathryn Dunn and Billy Mauldin are awaiting approval from the Governor's Office. A replacement will be needed with the departure of Jason Altmann. Two more new members, one deaf and one hard of hearing, are still needed, to complete the composition of the Council.

Linda Huffer advised the Council that it will be some time before the nominated names are approved, with the new Governor coming in and transition taking place. The outgoing Governor does not feel it is his place now to approve nominations or make appointments, and wants to leave them to the discretion of the new Governor.

- Linda Jennison suggested setting up a long-term project of developing an orientation package that would be given to nominees-in-waiting and new members when they join the Council.
- There are hearing individuals who are interested in serving the Council; presently, there is no hearing member vacancy. Their applications are in file for a future opening.

Legislative Initiatives (Sarah Benton):

- Sarah had a very productive meeting with a workgroup of post-secondary interpreters in regard to the Interpreter Licensure initiative and the implications of this initiative on interpreters working in the Wisconsin Technical College and UW Systems, as well as to garner their support for this initiative. A survey will be disseminated to these interpreters to assess their support or concerns regarding the initiative.
- A representative and a senator are interested in sponsoring the initiative as a bill but at this time there is no confirmation.
- Sarah, Alex, Twyla and Alice met to discuss hearing aid insurance as another legislative initiative.

Mental Health/AODA Subcommittee Report (Ron Sanders):

- The subcommittee met on November 22, and the staff from Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy experienced in handling some mental health cases involving deaf persons, attended. This organization gave its overview of the organization, and a presentation on how they could help the subcommittee in addressing the lack or inadequacy of standardized and specialized mental health care and AODA services for deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals in Wisconsin. There is no statute to provide mental health services for deaf and hard of hearing people in Wisconsin, unlike other states such as Illinois. There is no concrete or consolidated data of the number of deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing people using or needing mental health services, and this is critical if legislative initiative efforts are to be implemented.
- The Mental Health Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist position is now being advertised and interviews will take place shortly.
- AODA Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing recently formulated an advisory committee.
- Transitional Living Services in Milwaukee will expand its program to serve a wider array of deaf and hard of hearing individuals, not just those with mental health issues. The services would include job-related and independent living skills.

The next Council meeting agenda will focus on Mental Health issues, with the Bureau for Substance Abuse and the Bureau for Community Mental Health invited to participate.

SILC Report:

- Linda Jennison asked John Boyer if he would be interested in serving this Council, replacing Rick Postl; John has not made up his mind. He has concerns about transportation and communication access to be able to serve SILC effectively.

Linda Huffer reminded the Council that there is a considerable amount of statewide traveling during the year for SILC members; if John is elected as the Council's representative, he and the Council need to take that into consideration. Not only would he require communication access in meetings, but also special accommodations for travel and stay overs.

Other Reports:

- Linda Huffer, in her capacity as Assistant to the Division of Supportive Living Administrator, informed the Council that three Councils---Birth to 3, SILC, and the Governor's Council on People with Disabilities---are not statutory Councils. With the new Governor coming in, if these Councils are to exist, he would need to sign an Executive Order. The Council is encouraged to write a letter to the Governor in support of retaining the three Councils.

WITA Recommendations Report (Karen Dishno, BDHH):

- Educating the Community about WITA: BDHH staff has been doing, and will continue to do, training and presentations to various communities about WITA. Karen concurs with the recommendation of developing a WITA brochure. BDHH has been short-staffed so no action has been undertaken to work on the brochure. Materials for candidates will be revised by June 2003.
- Training of New Evaluators: Training was recently provided to a group of deaf people. Hearing evaluators are next on the training agenda. Karen expects an expanded pool of evaluators by June 30, after training has taken place.
- WITA Retakes: BDHH is not permitting retakes at this time because there had been recurring situations where some individuals were re-taking the WITA. Karen opines that it is not an issue of immediacy. Sarah Benton interjected by saying the reason for this recommendation is that some interpreters are not motivated to take national examinations and performance tests to receive certifications and keep resorting to WITA to maintain their verification.
- Grievance Procedure: Because of a pre-set difference in perspectives of some Council members and BDHH on this recommendation which led to clarifications in this discussion, Karen will re-visit the issue and report back to the Council at the next meeting. She will also examine more closely the Department's policies regarding grievance procedures. Sarah reiterated the WITA Subcommittee's concern that there was no mechanism for a filing a complaint against a WITA-verified interpreter who might be making a violation.
- Selection of Evaluators: Karen reported that she never received a complaint or faced an issue wherein an evaluator was not acceptable to an applicant.
- Coordination of WITA Evaluations: Coordination is improved; the Regional Coordinators have a schedule where applicants can sign up in advance to take performance tests, and evaluators are given advance notification as to when tapes will be ready for them for evaluation. Evaluators are granted two-week timeframes to complete evaluations. This system will be much improved with the expanded pool of evaluators.

- Written Test: In response to the subcommittee's assertion that the written test is a poor-quality tool and a better developed test should be implemented, Karen will check with Kansas to see if there is an upgraded version of the test. She added that there are people who do not pass.

BDHH Report (Linda Huffer and Alice Sykora):

- With the arrival of the new Governor, there will be a lot of changes in the Department of Health and Family Services after January 6, 2003. There will be a new Secretary and at the executive and administrative level of the Department. Linda will remain as Interim Director of BDHH, until otherwise notified.
- Two new Regional Coordinators were hired for the Milwaukee and Wausau regional offices: Rebecca Steele and Jason Altmann, respectively. They will begin on January 6, 2003.
- The BDHH Central Office will move, once again. They will be relocated to a 4th floor suite in the Department of Health and Family Services in early January.
- The revised administrative rules of the Service Fund took effect on December 1.

Presentation: Robyn Saviano, M.S.S.W, Women's Treatment Specialist, Department of Human and Family Services, Division of Supportive Living, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

- Robyn started out working in the Wisconsin prison system as a correctional officer, first at Columbia Correctional Institute, a maximum-security prison for men. She was assigned to a unit designed for inmates with mental illness. There, she had the opportunity to work with an interdisciplinary team of psychologists and other professionals who saw inmates in a different, non-punitive way. Because of her experiences, she pursued a master's degree in social work. Then she transferred to Dodge Correctional Institute, which is the state's reception center. This is the starting point for persons about to be incarcerated in one of the state's prisons. They go through an assessment and evaluation process so they can be placed in a prison that matches their needs. Robyn worked there as a therapist, doing both individual and group therapy. During her tenure there, female prisoners filed, and won, a lawsuit on the huge disparities of services between male and female prisoners. Because of the lawsuit, female prisoners started getting the same reception process at Dodge as the male prisoners. Robyn was struck with how many women entered the prison system with serious mental health or abuse issues, and how many left untreated for mental illness, experiencing alcohol or substance abuse, or experiencing turmoil or trauma as mothers being separated from their children or with custodial issues due to being incarcerated. That spurred her to do a profile study, perhaps the first of its kind in the country, on women in prisons. Her study concentrated only in Wisconsin. She also mentioned that prisoners who have disabilities do not have accommodations or access to services. She is now with the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, and does training and presentations at correctional facilities and conferences.
- Robyn's responses to Council's questions and concerns about deaf and hard of hearing prisoners:
 - It is her estimation that there are practically no services for deaf and hard of hearing prisoners. This is true of other prisoners with disabilities. There is a mentality and perception of these people as unworthy of care.

- Interpreting and other access services are most likely not considered or provided in prisons for deaf and hard of hearing prisoners, nor are accommodations for those with other disabilities.
- Robyn has associations with people in the prison system whom she thinks cares about the issues. She would be happy to connect BDHH with them.
- She recommended that BDHH continue its training efforts.
- Advocacy is the key, and not only the conviction of influencing changes but truly understanding the issues and the inner workings of the prison system.

Presentation: Chris Kometer, Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Chris is a new staff member at the Center, having arrived there last July from Missouri where she was for the last 13 years. She is the Program Director of the Kellogg Child and Family Program. She has a solid professional background in parent/infant and Birth-to-3 services.
- Chris distributed CDHH's Annual Report to the Council, which has descriptions of all the programs at the Center. CDHH offers comprehensive services and activities for parents and children who are deaf and hard of hearing in eight counties, mostly in the southeastern part of Wisconsin. CDHH occasionally offers consultation services to Birth-to-3 services in other counties but does not offer regular services.
- Christine, along with Alice Sykora, has been involved in the development of a Parent Notebook, which will be distributed to parents of newly- or recently-identified deaf and hard of hearing babies. This project is coordinated through Sound Beginnings.
- Christine, when asked about having a legislative initiative on mandatory hearing aid insurance funding, feels parents, audiologists, speech pathologists, and even doctors would support such an initiative.

Council Effectiveness:

- To increase Council visibility, Sarah asked the Council and others to list conferences, meetings and other events that members could attend and share information with the general public about the Council. There is a perception among deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing communities that the Council does not represent their needs.

New Business:

The Council agreed that they would move to make motions but because of an insufficient number of members to meet the quorum, there would be no vote on the motions in this meeting.

- Linda Jennison moved to put together an orientation package for new members. Seconded.
- Linda Jennison moved that Helen Rizzi be the point person to compile the package. Seconded.
- For ideas to include in the package, the Council is encouraged to email or send them to Linda Jennison. Helen Rizzi proposed to have a list of acronyms that the Council uses, such as "WSD".
- Helen Rizzi will write to the new Governor about the three Councils.
- The next Council meeting will have Mental Health on its agenda. Other agenda items include WITA and hard of hearing issues.

Public Comments:

Todd Behana from the Wisconsin Telecommunications Relay Service (WTRS) gave this update to the Council:

- Hamilton, which sponsors the Relay Service, has Internet Relay ready for roll out, but it is awaiting clearance from the Federal Communications Commission. When it is ready, people will be able to use their computers to make TTY calls, and there'd be no long distance charges involved.
- Hamilton is also looking into the feasibility of having Video Relay Service as part of their overall service.
- The pilot period of Fastran will end on March 31, 2003; Hamilton is working on integrating Fastran in the WTRS platform.
- Hamilton is a major sponsor of the WAD Conference which will take place in June 2003 as well as the Deaf Stage festival sometime in the summer.
- WTRS will send a letter to consumers who have a profile with WTRS asking them to update their profiles. Updated and accurate profiles will ensure better quality services from WTRS.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.